

Monadnock Regional School District (MRSD)
School Board Meeting Minutes
April 6, 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting, Swanzey, NH

Members Present: Kristen Noonan, Winston Wright, Lisa Steadman, Colleen Toomey, Scott Peters, Eric Stanley, Nick Mosher, Cheryl McDaniel-Thomas, Michelle Connor, Karen Wheeler, Brian Bohannon and Dan LeClair **Absent:** Betty Tatro

Administration Present: L. Witte, Superintendent, J. Rathbun, Director of Curriculum and Student Assessment, C. Woods, Director of Student Services and J. Morin, Business Administrator.

Also Present: L. Aivaliotis, Recording Secretary

“We collaborate not just to teach, but also to engage and educate every student in our district in an environment that is challenging, caring and safe, while fostering life-long learning.”

1. CALL TO ORDER: S. Peters opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS: M. Divens of Swanzey would suggest sending a waiver to Concord and ask to have the students return the week after spring break. She would suggest resources in order to have tents for outside learning. She also hopes that masks stay in place.

Deb Gove of Swanzey and a teacher at Emerson said it has been a rough year for everyone. There is a concern from the staff until all are vaccinated. She would suggest the Board also request a waiver. There is a concern that the 3-foot minimum is not possible. She would ask the Board to reopen safely for the students and staff.

Adam Hopkins of Troy said he does not envy the Board with the Governor’s decision. If the students go back, the full remote students will be losing Friday which is for the students to communicate to their teachers. He would suggest live streaming, Zoom with the teachers. Kids in class could help the students who wish to go remote.

R. Vogt of Swanzey said she is excited for the kids to go back to school. There are a lot of kids suffering because of not going to school. Students should have open windows and open doors. She is concerned with the locker rooms. They are not opened and it is difficult for students to get dressed in the bathrooms. She thanked the Board for everything they do.

3. CELEBRATE MRSD: S. Peters would like to start the Board Meetings off with positive information. Celebrate MRSD allows individuals to nominate someone in the district who has done something to help. Tony Breen was nominated and the administration presented a certificate. There have been over 1000 nominations. L. Witte suggested paying it forward. If someone nominates you in turn, nominate someone else. This is an awesome and positive

program. S. Peters would like to know how many staff, paras and employees have been nominated.

S. Peters happened to be in the SAU where the quilt made by the students is housed. He read each square, took a picture of each square, gathered the responses and made a chart. The chart showed how many times the students were thankful for specific things. K. Noonan said it was a great idea and thanked S. Peters for bringing it to the beginning of the meeting.

4. MATTERS FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION:

a. Budget Committee Update:

i. Response from the Budget Committee Input Request: S. Peters was at the most recent Budget Committee Meeting and the letter from the Board was discussed. He told the committee that the Board would like to have a Budget Committee Member be active in the Board dialogue. The committee agreed to discuss the MDEA negotiations and the inflation rate of the CIP at their next meeting. S. Peters will be attending the next meeting on April 27, 2021.

b. Board Chair Report:

i. Status on Board Member Documents: S. Peters explained everyone had signed and returned their forms except for K. Wheeler and N. Mosher. S. Peters will talk to them offline.

ii. Schedule of Activity for Committees and Barker Associates: S. Peters explained Article Three passed and the funds will be used for the blueprints for the renovations to the district elementary schools. S. Peters presented the timeline for the project step by step until the bond vote in 2023. Barker Associates will be doing a detailed walk through at Troy, Emerson and Gilsum. They will also help with the application for building aid. A price tag and blueprints are required with the application. S. Peters explained we will need to hire a Construction Manager. We will have to get 3 bids. Educational Specs will be needed from the Education Committee. The committee will meet with the community. The floor plan design will be approved by the Board in December. He showed an example of Education Specs. The administration from each building will bring their expertise. There is also a need to hire a Clerk of the Works. It is going to be a busy summer.

iii. Draft Board Goals: The Board will draft goals and have committee reports at the next Board Meeting.

iv. Inputs for Superintendent Goals: The Board had discussed asking the Superintendent to craft her own goals. Any input from the Board should be discussed offline.

c. Operations/Superintendent's Report:

i. Hybrid Remote Count Update (in packet): L. Witte explained the hybrid/remote information is in the packets. Little by little the hybrid model is increasing.

ii. Updates School Guidance (in packet): L. Witte explained the information on school guidance was in the packet. She also emailed additional documents. The Board needs to decide what guidance to follow. B. Bohannon said he sees some issues the CDC and the State are separate. L. Witte explained the Board has been following the DHHS guidelines since Sept. She would like a decision on what guidance to follow. N. Mosher said the Board has overridden guidance regarding sports. We should follow DHHS. **MOTION:** N. Mosher **MOVED** to adopt the current and ongoing New Hampshire's DHHS safety guidelines as they are released, to be reviewed at an August meeting during back to school planning. **SECOND:** M. Connor. **DISCUSSION:** K. Noonan would like to follow the CDC guidelines. L. Witte said it is

guidance, it is not a must. L. Steadman suggested a list of things that differ from the DHHS and the CDC. S. Peters said that information is not available tonight and would be a bit of work. C. McDaniel-Thomas would also like the CDC guidance. K. Wheeler agrees with K. Noonan. M. Connor commented that nothing stops us from discussing anything in the future. We are not locked in. K. Noonan is bothered by the quarantine and social distancing in regards to the DHHS. B. Bohannon would agree with K. Noonan. N. Mosher said we are clearing out classrooms and quarantining. L. Witte explained with 6 feet social distancing there may not be a need to quarantine. Currently, we identify folks and quarantine if necessary. N. Mosher would like everyone to quarantine in the classroom if there is a case. K. Wheeler would like to make a **friendly amendment to follow the CDC guidelines**. N. Mosher and M. Connor agreed. L. Witte explained the Governor's order is 3' social distancing which is not feasible. We may not be able to achieve. She said the CDC says all adults 6' social distancing. We will have this conversation at every meeting. C. McDaniel-Thomas commented there will be fewer conversations with DHHS. It is time to get kids back to school. L. Steadman said the Governor is in line with the State guidelines. B. Bohannon asked what L. Witte would purpose regarding tracing and quarantining. L. Witte said to follow the guidelines. K. Wheeler would like to go with the CDC regarding quarantine and tracing. K. Noonan would like to add a **friendly amendment "with the exception of social distancing at a minimum of 3' a part but 6' preferred."** There was no second on the friendly amendment. M. Connor asked how the CDC guidelines affect sports and extracurricular activities. **VOTE:** 5.449/6.429/0/1.122. **Motion fails.** **MOTION:** L. Steadman **MOVED** to adopt the current and ongoing New Hampshire's DHHS safety guidelines as they are released, to be reviewed at an August meeting during back to school planning. **SECOND:** D. LeClair. **DISCUSSION:** N. Mosher said we will not be able to follow DHHS guidelines with full return. **MOTION:** B. Bohannon **MOVED** to amend the motion to follow NH DHHS but leverage prior NH DHHS guidelines for contract tracing and quarantine measures. **SECOND:** K. Wheeler. **VOTE on amendment:** 10.757/0/1.325/1.122. **Amendment passes.** **VOTE on amended motion:** 10.544/0/1.325/1.122. **Motion passes.**

iii. **Update on Grant Funding:** L. Witte asked to bring the Board's attention to the Program of Assurances, what we agree or not agree to do by accepting this grant. A question is whether budgeted items can be covered. The application is a grant system, identifies activities to use funds and create a budget. We are waiting for some answers. Regarding indoor air quality, we are talking to scientists at KSC. We are engaged with her and her team to take a look at our buildings and find out what recommendations they may suggest. Allocate district wide initiatives which have to be approved such as social and emotional support for students and student performance learning gaps and loss due to the pandemic. This is to bring the Board up to speed and to make you aware of the Program of Assurances so she can sign and submit the document.

iv. **2021/2022 Proposed Budget Reductions:** L. Witte presented the Budget Reduction Worksheet to the Board. She explained she had met a number of times with the administration and discussed the reductions. We had our actual insurance rate and were able to put the savings in the budget. There is no direct impact to the early retirement offer but possibly in the future. Due to the reduction in the budget proposed by the Budget Committee and voted on by the voters the administration had to find \$855,000.00 in reductions with the savings in the GMR they need to find \$740,000.00 in reductions. Some of the reductions included reduce the subline and a full time Spec. Ed. teacher at MTC (shift to regular ed. teacher), a preschool teacher at Troy, reductions in the subline also at Troy. Reductions in equipment, reductions in

the subline and a reduction in building and grounds supplies at Gilsum, at MRMHS reduce 1 FT wellness teacher (shift to district wide Wellness teacher, funded by CARES), 1 FT French Teacher, 1 FT night custodian, reduce sublines and supplies (including athletics), at Emerson reduce 1 FT Special Ed. paraprofessional, reduce supplies, reduce building and grounds, at Cutler reduce the subline, reduce supplies, Emerson will have a reduction in a Special Ed. Paraprofessional, supply lines including building and grounds and at the SAU reduce out of district tuition, reduce furniture replacement, reduce supplies, reduce sublines, 1 FT grant position to free up funds for the unanticipated paraprofessional. N. Mosher said some parents were concerned with the lack of a French Teacher. L. Witte said VLACS has foreign language offerings. We do offer Spanish in person. L. Steadman asked if the student can work on VLACS during ITime and is there anyone on the staff who speaks French.

5. MATTERS THAT REQUIRE BOARD ACTION:

a. Motion to Support Budget Reductions: MOTION: N. Mosher **MOVED** to accept the Budget Reduction Plan as proposed by the administration. **SECOND:** W. Wright. **DISCUSSION:** S. Peters said this is painful. We do not like to take services away from kids. **VOTE:** 10.757/1.122/0/1.122. **Motion passes.**

b. Motion to return to 4-day in person learning beginning 5/3/2021: L. Witte explained the agenda had been made prior to the Governor's Executive Order of a full return on April 19, 2021. In the packet is a letter from the NHSBA challenging the full return. L. Witte has drafted a letter to send to the DOE asking for a waiver on the bases of staff not being fully vaccinated. She explained the staff is not fully vaccinated. There are a large number of staff who will be fully vaccinated right after or before Spring break. We are asking for a waiver. It is a safety issue. **MOTION:** C. Toomey **MOVED** to send the letter requesting a waiver and continue with the plan to return to in person learning 5 days per week on May 3, 2021. **SECOND:** W. Wright. **DISCUSSION:** L. Witte explained when it is a 5-day week we will need paras. L. Steadman asked for an edit on the letter. **MOTION:** L. Steadman **MOVED** to change "This is inaccurate." to "In Cheshire County we believe this is not accurate." in the letter to the DOE. **SECOND:** K. Noonan. **DISCUSSION:** N. Mosher supports the original letter. K. Wheeler would agree. C. Toomey also agrees. C. McDaniel-Thomas said she likes the wording and N. Mosher said the original is to the point. **VOTE:** .998/10.880/0/1.122. **Motion fails.** K. Wheeler does support the letter but personally would like to stay hybrid until the end of the school year. It is in the best interest to get everyone vaccinated and have an end of the year celebration. **MOTION:** N. Mosher **MOVED** to amend the motion and letter to indicate a return at the start of the next school year. **SECOND:** K. Wheeler. **DISCUSSION:** S. Peters said it is a notice. We will not comply. K. Noonan said it will be warmer weather and use the open spaces. She does not agree with the amendment. The kids are struggling and the mental health is not okay. We need to get them back to school. W. Wright is not in favor of the motion. M. Connor agrees with K. Noonan and W. Wright. L. Witte said the nicer weather is coming. Waiting is the worst thing we can do. The goal is to get kids back to school. L. Witte explained the survey had an overwhelming response regarding vaccines and going back to school on May 3, 2021. Mask breaks are necessary and the principals need to tighten up the rules. People are nervous but will be protected. N. Mosher said we want safety but it may not be physically possible. K. Wheeler said she understands students need to go back and some students feel insecure going back. There are two sides to the mental health issue. **VOTE:** 3.213/8.666/0/1.122. **Motion fails. MOTION:**

B. Bohannon **MOVED** to amend the motion and adjust the letter. Strike sentence “We Understand” Change to “We all desire” to be “Our intent is” **SECOND: K. Wheeler. VOTE on amendment: 11.665/0/.213/1.122. Motion passes. DISCUSSION: K. Noonan to change to “Declaring our intent” in the original motion as a friendly amendment. C. Toomey and W. Wright agreed to the friendly amendment. VOTE: 10.544/1.122/.213/1.122. Motion passes. E Stanley leaves the meeting.**

c. Troy School-MPR Abatement and Flooring: J. Morin explained the abatement and flooring was part of a warrant article in 2019. K. Barker agreed this work should be done. In regards to the elementary school project not a lot of work will be done in the MPR area. **MOTION:** B. Bohannon **MOVED** to accept the bid from ABEST and Syd’s to conduct the floor abatement at Troy School. **SECOND: N. Mosher. DISCUSSION: D. LaPointe** said Syd’s is slightly higher but he feels more comfortable with them. J. Morin explained the total cost is \$50,004.00. We have \$55,000.00 available for the project. **VOTE: 10.757/0/0/2.243. Motion passes.** L. Steadman asked why there were not 3 bids for the flooring. L. Witte said the 3 bids lie on her shoulders and she apologizes.

d. Accept John Guilfoil PR LLC Proposal: J. Rathbun had received bids from 2 companies in Keene and 1 in Arkansas. They were more marketing but none had school PR experience. One of the companies would charge \$100,000.00. J. Guilfoil will cost \$31,267.00 for the first year. We will pay for it from a transfer in the school budget. The Ecology School had a deposit from last year. The 6th grade will be doing video conferencing and the hope is for the Ecology school to come to Monadnock the first week in May. The students will not travel to the Ecology School so they will not need the funds. J. Rathbun would recommend a one year inclusive for John Guilfoil PR LLC. They are currently working with other schools in NH. The contracted year is starting June 30, 2021 but they are ready to start now. The amount is \$31,267.00. **MOTION:** C. Toomey **MOVED** to accept the Public Relations Firm proposal from John Guilfoil PR LLC in the amount of \$31,267.00. **SECOND: C. McDaniel-Thomas. VOTE: 8.66/.757/1.335/2.243. Motion passes.**

e. March 16, 2021 Minutes (recount) and March 16, 2021 Minutes: MOTION: C. McDaniel-Thomas **MOVED** to approve the March 16, 2021 Public Meeting and Non-Public Meeting Minutes and the March 16, 2021 Recount Meeting Minutes as presented. **SECOND: C. Toomey. VOTE: 9.787/0/.970/2.243 Motion passes.**

g. Manifest: MOTION: C. McDaniel-Thomas **MOVED** to approve the manifest in the amount of \$2,704,402.92 **SECOND: C.Toomey. VOTE: 10.757/0/0/2.243. Motion passes.**

6. SETTING MEETING’S AGENDA:

- a. Data Report**
- b. Education Items**
- c. Proposal change to Policy BCA**

7. Public Comments: Stacie Brennan commented on the mental status of the children during the pandemic. It has a negative impact on the students. There is an increase in children

between 13 and 18 years of harming themselves. We are putting the student body at risk not going back to school.

D. Coffman of Swanzey commented on the Board ignoring the Governor's executive order and following DHHS. Personally it is a fear of you adults. He has not heard of increased staff getting COVID. Put tents in the parking lots. Except for the safety of the vaccines it is not working for the kids regarding their performance. Consider the kids and the results. The Education needs to get more creative and get back to school per the Governor.

R. Vogt would like to see some kind of project for the students. Get the kids outside. Help in any way. They need a lot more than what we are giving.

M. Divens commented tents on the school property would help with the 6' of social distancing.

8. 10:10 PM Motion to enter into a Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3 II(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person: MOTION: K. Noonan **MOVED** to enter into a non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person. **SECOND:** S. Peters **VOTE:** 10.757/0/0/2.243. **Motion passes.**

9. 10:30PM Motion to enter into a Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A:3 II(b) Hiring of a public employee: MOTION: K. Noonan **MOVED** to enter into a non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (b) Hiring of a public employee. **SECOND:** W. Wright **VOTE:** 10.757/0/0/2.243. **Motion passes.**

10. ADJOURNMENT: MOTION: C. Toomey **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 10:42 PM. **SECOND:** K. Noonan **VOTE:** 10.757/0/0/2.243. **Motion passes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Laura L. Aivaliotis
Recording Secretary

VOTING KEY: Yes/No/Abstain/Absent